

# RISKS AND BENEFITS



## THE RISKS

If coordination is such a good idea, why isn't everybody doing it? Coordination IS a good idea. It is also very difficult. Risks, both real and perceived, of partnering with others to coordinate services are typically characterized as follows:

### Accountability & Liability

**Shared Decision Making.** Will I lose control of my program and my services?

**Flexibility.** Will the rules and regulations of my funding agency be honored? If not, am I accountable?

**Consolidation of Functions and Infrastructure.** Will I lose authority and areas of responsibility if some of my functions are more efficiently done elsewhere?

**Pooling Resources.** How do I know that my money gets spent on my clients?

**Shared Responsibility.** Who is liable in a coordinated system with multiple funding sources paying for common trips?

**Contract Management.** How will I be sure I am protected and my interests are represented? Will I have to get the lawyers involved all the time to help make these agreements something I want to sign?

### Costs

**Up-Front Investment.** Time and money have to be spent up-front, while the benefits occur down the road. We assume the benefits are there, but are they really? What if my up-front investment doesn't pay off?

**Trust.** How do I know that other agencies aren't using coordination as a way to shift their costs to me?

**Planning Costs.** I can't take money away from my services in order to fund my planning activities. How can I pay for the coordination work that I do?

**More Rides for People with the Same Amount of Dollars.** If I do a good job of coordinating, will my budget be cut, rather than reinvested in more service?

### Quality of Service

**Shared Responsibility for Service Delivery.** Will other agencies provide my clients with the same quality of service? Will they understand the specific needs of my customers?

**Different Ways of Delivering Service.** Perhaps passengers will have to share rides instead of riding alone, or be on the vehicle a little longer. How will I help my clients make this transition?

**Sharing Information and Sharing Rides.** How do I protect client confidentiality in a coordinated system?

### Staff

**Coordination Takes Time.** My normal job takes all my time. If I work with my partners to coordinate services, will I be able to keep up with my regular work?

**Efficiency in Service Delivery.** Does efficiency mean that fewer people will be needed to do the work? Will I lose my job? Will I have to let people go?



# THE BENEFITS

If you have a vision, a plan, and persistence, you can coordinate transportation services in your community. The rewards are worth the risks. Communities that successfully coordinate special needs transportation manage to constructively resolve the issues of risk and move forward to reap the rewards. Coordination can:

## Reduce Average Cost of Passenger Trips

A trip from White Salmon to Vancouver costs \$80. The senior services van cut costs for several programs by coordinating trips with the Medicaid broker, the Area Agency on Agency, and WorkFirst, to group rides for all programs. Instead of transporting one person for \$80, ten people may ride on the van for \$100.

## Provide More Trips

In Douglas County, Link Transit was unable to serve the remote areas of the county. By partnering with TranCare, a company that was running vehicles to the town of Mansfield, the transit system was able to bring people from Mansfield to a Link Transit connection point where they could access the transit system to travel throughout Wenatchee.

## Increase Infrastructure Efficiencies

In Ferry County the school districts and transportation providers took vehicles to Spokane for maintenance, placing vehicles out of operation for two days, and using up driver resources.

A partnership to create an in-county maintenance facility that could be used by all agencies saved money and allowed for drivers and vehicles to be back in service quickly.

## Enable Providers to Maintain a Smaller Fleet

Providers can spend money on services rather than on purchasing vehicles and equipment. The Auburn School District did not have the vehicles and drivers to transport out-of-district homeless students to and from school.

A partnership with Hopelink to broker transportation for those students allows the district to provide the rides through other community transportation providers.

## Afford Access to Wider Pool of Transportation Providers

Providers can meet peak periods of demand without increasing staff and fleet size. Mason Transit did not have the vehicles and drivers to meet the demand for bus service in the peak hours between 5 pm and 6 pm. The Shelton School District could not provide after school transportation due to lack of funding.

By turning the Shelton school buses into transit buses at 5 pm, the community was able to provide after school transportation for students and meet peak demand for commuter transportation without purchasing additional transit buses.

## Enable Health and Human Service Agencies to Focus on Their Core Mission

Let the transportation experts deal with the transportation issues. Harborview Medical Center was spending excessive staff time and money arranging transportation for people discharged from the hospital.

By partnering with Hopelink, a transportation broker that stationed its staff in the hospital, the hospital relinquished transportation responsibilities and focused on patient care. Costs went down and discharges were less stressful for patients.

## Economies of Scale

When the Olympic Community Action Programs purchased vans for a community coordination project, it saved \$20,000 in one transaction by having the purchase done through Clallam Transit's vehicle purchasing process.